

Responsible Research Evaluation Forum 2024

Implementation of the SCOPE Framework

inorms research evaluation group

Summary of SCOPE Workshop

By Baron G. Wolf and Rachel Miles

For more than a decade, responsible research assessment has evolved in academia from the inception of declarations, principles, and organizational statements to more action-oriented initiatives, such as the [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#), [Tools to Advance Research Assessment \(TARA\)](#), and the [SCOPE Framework for Research Evaluation](#).

In 2018, The International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) Research Evaluation Working Group introduced the SCOPE Framework as a roadmap, or a process, for evaluating research responsibly. The acronym SCOPE stands for its five-stage process:

- **S**TART with what you value
- **C**ONTEXT considerations
- **O**PTIONS for measuring
- **P**ROBE deeply
- **E**VALUATE your evaluation

Over the past six years, the INORMS Research Evaluation Working Group has worked closely with groups across the academic sector to help them use the SCOPE Framework in their own research evaluation exercises. In 2023, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded a grant ([grant number: LG-254850-OLS-23](#)) to Dr. Baron Wolf, Assistant Vice President for Research and Director for Research Analytics at the University of Kentucky, and Co-PI Rachel Miles, Research Impact Coordinator at Virginia Tech University Libraries, to workshop the SCOPE Framework in the US at a two-day, in-person forum that brought together librarians, researchers, university administrators, and research managers and provided formal training in making strategic decisions using research evaluation methods. The

forum took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico, March 13-14, 2024 (<https://evaluationforum.uky.edu>).

What was the purpose of the forum?

The purpose of the forum was to build a community of practice of university administrators, research managers, and academic librarians in the fields of research impact, research analytics, research development, and scholarly communication; bring experts together at a forum; and to develop experts' skills and improve their methodologies in research evaluation.

What was covered?

Day 1

First, participants signed up for specific topical breakout sessions, which they had to commit to for the entirety of each day of the forum during the breakout sessions. The specific topical areas included:

- How do we evaluate research/researcher diversity (department-level)?
- What does it mean to be a high-quality institution?
- How do we evaluate research excellence for a department within arts and humanities?
- How should promotion and tenure be evaluated (individual level)?

Morning Plenary Sessions

The forum kicked off with a keynote session from Dr. Nicky Agate, Associate Dean for Academic Engagement at Carnegie Mellon University Libraries and the co-lead on the [HuMetricsHSS Initiative](#). This was a pre-recorded session and emphasized the “power of values-enacted frameworks for understanding and evaluating all aspects of scholarly life well-lived” (HuMetricsHSS, 2024).

Dr. Erica Conte, Director of Funding Strategy and Stewardship at Unity Health Toronto, introduced the SCOPE Framework followed by a plenary group exercise: “Apply SCOPE to a University Ranking Methodology” by Dr. Elizabeth (Lizzie) Gadd, Head of Research and Innovation Culture and Assessment at Loughborough University. This session was a deep dive into each step of the framework to determine if it could pass the litmus test of SCOPE based on the methodology used by an individual university ranking methodology. Spoiler alert: it didn't live up to SCOPE's expectations. This was a forum-wide group exercise to prepare attendees for the remaining workshop content.

In the afternoon, Tanja Stróm, Senior Advisor at Oslo Metropolitan University, virtually presented “Exploring the ‘S’ and ‘C’ of SCOPE” as a precursor to the breakout session exercises. The ‘S’ stands for ‘Start with what you value.’ In other words, the group or organization conducting the evaluation should first consider its own values rather than others’ values (external drivers) or using the available data (the [Streetlight Effect](#)). SCOPE defines values as judgments made about what we deem important (INORMS, 2021). The ‘C’ stands for ‘Context considerations’ and focuses on two primary questions: why are you evaluating and who (or what) are you evaluating?

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

The breakout sessions focused on deploying the ‘S’ and ‘C’ of the SCOPE Framework with each specific topical area. Lead by a facilitator who was trained in the SCOPE Framework, each group brainstormed these stages of the Framework, with one member acting as a recorder of information, and participants engaged in group discussion and questions.

Day 2

Morning Plenary Session

Dr. Baron Wolf opened the forum with a plenary session in the morning, which focused on the ‘O’ of the SCOPE Framework: Options for evaluating. The purpose of this stage is to explore both qualitative and quantitative options for evaluating the values selected within the chosen contexts. As a general rule, quantitative measures should be used for quantitative things: citations, research expenditures, and student numbers are all quantitative while research impact and quality are qualitative and should be measured qualitatively (INORMS, 2021).

Morning Breakout Sessions

These breakout sessions focused on the ‘O’ SCOPE Framework. There are two additional frameworks that can also be used to help when selecting options and metrics/indicators:

- RACER: Relevant, Applicable, Credible, Easy, Robust
- SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

During the breakout sessions, participants were encouraged to either write on large white pages provided or use sticky post-its to add qualitative and quantitative options to the values.

Afternoon Plenary Session 1

Dr. Conte presented on the ‘P’ of the SCOPE Framework: Probe deeply. This step is likely the most challenging step of the Framework and requires evaluators to probe for potentially harmful impacts and possible unintended consequences. Four main questions should be considered:

1. Who might this discriminate against?
2. How might this be gamed?
3. What might the unintended consequences be?
4. What is the cost-benefit?

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

These breakout sessions focused on the ‘P’ SCOPE Framework: Probe deeply.

Afternoon Plenary Sessions

Tanja Stróm presented on the ‘E’ of the SCOPE Framework: Evaluate your evaluation, which was not a part of the breakout sessions, since it must be done post-evaluation. After designing and implementing your evaluation, you should not stop here. Often, unintended consequences come to light, despite completing the Probe stage. Re-run the SCOPE Framework on your evaluation:

- What value did you get from the evaluation?
- In what contexts might you evaluate your evaluation?
- What are your options for evaluating your evaluation?
- Can you probe the evaluation outcomes to identify any unintended consequences or discriminatory effects?

After evaluating your evaluation, you can either redesign it or rerun it (INORMS, 2021).

After the ‘E’ plenary session, groups reported on their breakout sessions, discussed what went well and what didn't, and asked questions of other group participants and facilitators. The discussion was quite lively with most feeling that they would like to take the SCOPE Framework back to their organizations while a handful still felt skeptical.

Finally, the closing plenary session was presented by Dr. Gadd related to trust and transparency in our systems of research assessment, evaluation, and practice. It focused on why these things matter and the harm some evaluations cause to both individuals and entities. The SCOPE Framework is being used across the globe in a variety of settings, including national funding strategies and individual institutional settings. To learn more about the framework, please visit: <https://inorms.net/scope-framework-for-research-evaluation>. Each of the groups are currently working on white papers to be published on the outcomes of the forum and the specific topics covered throughout the workshop. Those white papers will be available via an open access repository and/or journal later in 2024. If you have questions about the SCOPE Framework or the Responsible Research Evaluation Forum, please contact Baron Wolf or Rachel Miles. ■



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